

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of the rejections set forth in the Office Action dated October 6, 2004 is respectfully requested. Claims 1-30 are currently pending. Claims 1, 5-12, 14, 15, and 18-21 have been rejected. Claims 2-4, 13, 16, 17, and 22-30 have been objected to.

Claims 1, 14, 22, and 25 have been amended to provide clarity. Claim 1 has additionally been amended to include a limitation of an air bearing arrangement that is arranged to enable a first stage to be driven in a first direction substantially without friction. Support for this amendment may be found in the Specification, as for example on page 9 at lines 10-11. Claims 2, 13, and 16 have been amended to be rewritten in independent form. Claim 14 has been amended to include a limitation that a first stage assembly includes an air bearing arrangement that is arranged to enable a first stage to be driven substantially without friction. Support for this amendment may be found in the Specification, as for example on page 9 at lines 10-11.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner has indicated that claims 22-30 would be allowable if rewritten to correct minor informalities. The minor informalities identified by the Examiner in the Office Action dated October 6, 2004 have been corrected. As such, claims 22-30 are now believed to be allowable.

Claims 2-4, 13, 16, and 17 have been objected to as each being dependent upon a rejected base claim. The Examiner has stated that claims 2-4, 13, 16, and 17 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of their respective base claims and any intervening claims.

Claim 2 has been rewritten in independent form, and is now believed to be allowable over the cited art. As claims 3 and 4 each depend directly from newly independent claim 2, claims 3 and 4 are also believed to be allowable. Claims 13 and 16 have also been rewritten in

independent form, and are also now believed to be allowable over the cited art. Since claim 17 depends directly from newly independent claim 16, claim 17 is also believed to be allowable.

Drawings

The drawings have been objected to by the Examiner. In response to the Examiner's objection to Figure 1, Figure 1 has been amended to include a --Prior Art-- legend. Drawings sheets which show the amendment made to Figure 1, as well as a replacement sheet for Figure 1, are being submitted herewith. As such, it is believed that the Examiner's objection to Figure 1 has been overcome.

Specification

The Examiner has objected to the disclosure for including informalities. Specifically, the Examiner has requested that the Applicants insert "Prior Art" wording on page 5 of the Specification, at lines 3 and 4. The Applicants respectfully submit that the insertion of "Prior Art" wording at lines 3 and 4 on page 5 of the Specification would not be proper, as the subject matter at line 3 of page 5 is not prior art. However, it appears to the Applicants that "Prior Art" wording may be proper at line 28 on page 5 of the Specification. In a sincere effort to address the Examiner's objection to the Specification, the paragraph beginning at line 27 on page 5 has been amended to include "Prior Art" wording. The Applicants hope that this amendment is sufficient to overcome the Examiner's objection to the Specification.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102 and 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1, 5, 6, 12, and 14 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Hirai et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,667,139). Claims 1, 5, 8-12, 14, 15, 18, 20, and 21 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Trumper et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,699,621). Claims 1, 5-12, 14, 15, and 18-21 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Poon et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,281,655). Claim 19 has been rejected

under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Trumper et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,699,621) as applied to claims 12 and 18, and further in view of Williams (U.S. Patent No. 6,353,271).

1. Independent claim 1 and its dependents

As amended, claim 1 recites that a stage apparatus includes a first stage that is arranged to define an interior space, a first actuator that is positioned substantially within the interior space, and an air bearing arrangement. It is respectfully submitted that neither Hirai et al. nor Trumper et al. teaches of a first actuator that is positioned substantially within an interior space of a first stage. As stated by the Examiner on page 2 of the Office Action dated October 6, 2004, “arranging the first stage with an interior space means that the **interior space is within the first stage.**” [Emphasis Added] The actuators of Hirai et al. and Trumper et al. do not appear to be located within an interior space that is within a stage, and appear to be positioned in spaces defined on an exterior of a stage.

None of the cited art teaches of a stage apparatus which includes a first actuator that is positioned within an interior space of a first stage and also includes an air bearing arrangement. Additionally, it does not appear to the Applicants that an air bearing arrangement which is arranged to enable a first stage to be driven substantially without friction in a first direction by a first actuator positioned in an interior space of the first stage is taught or suggested in any of Hirai et al., Trumper et al., or Poon et al. As such, the Applicants believe that claim 1 is allowable over the cited art for at least these reasons.

Claims 5-11 each depend either directly or indirectly from independent claim 1, and are therefore each believed to be allowable over the cited art for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 1. Each of these dependent claims recite additional limitations which, when considered in light of claim 1, are believed to further distinguish the claimed invention over the art of record.

2. *Independent claim 12 and its dependents*

Claim 12, as amended, recites that a stage device includes a first stage assembly that includes a first stage, a first actuator, and an air bearing arrangement. The first stage is arranged to define an interior space in which a first actuator is positioned. As discussed above, neither Hirai et al. nor Trumper et al. teaches of a first actuator that is positioned substantially within an interior space of a first stage, and none of the cited art appears to teach of a stage assembly with an air bearing arrangement that enables a first actuator positioned in an interior space defined within a first stage to drive the first stage substantially without friction. Accordingly, claim 12 is believed to be allowable for at least this reason.

Claims 14, 15, and 18-21 each depend either directly or indirectly from claim 12 and are, therefore, each believed to be allowable over the cited art for at least the reason set forth with respect to claim 12.

Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, the Applicants believe all the pending claims are in condition for allowance and should be passed to issue. If the Examiner feels that a telephone conference would in any way expedite the prosecution of the application, please do not hesitate to call the undersigned at (408) 446-8696.

Respectfully submitted,



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Amendments to the Drawings:

The attached sheet of drawings includes changes to Fig. 1. This sheet, which includes Fig. 1, replaces the original sheet including Fig. 1.

Attachment: Replacement Sheet
Annotated Sheet Showing Changes

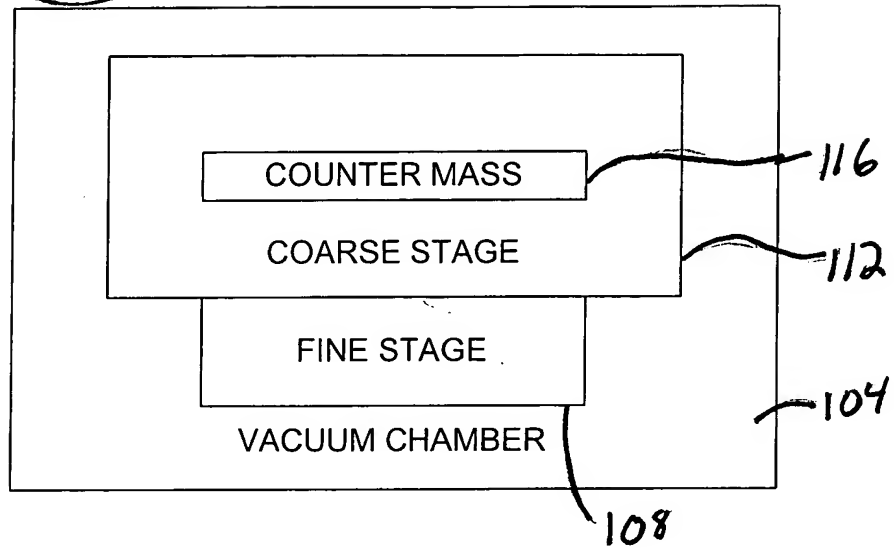


Fig. /
PRIOR ART